

# Double dipping a hot topic as retirees collect public paychecks

**Danny Robbins,  
Tammy Webber and  
Peter Jackson**  
Associated Press

DALLAS — At a state agency in Texas, the executive director is receiving a \$123,000-a-year salary even as he is drawing a government pension, as he has for the past eight years. In a struggling Michigan school district, 10 administrators retired, started drawing pension checks and returned immediately as contract employees.

A school administrator in Illinois makes a combined \$409,000 a year in pension payments and salary for overseeing a public boarding school.

Double-dipping — the well-established practice of public workers collecting government pensions and salaries at the same time — has become a hot

Find more of  
this article at  
**News-Herald.  
com** and tell  
us what you think  
about double dipping



topic for lawmakers around the country during these times of severely strained budgets and increased focus on the benefits provided to government employees.

Yet even as some states have begun curbing the practice, a review by The Associated Press found tens of thousands of state and public school employees across the country drawing government salaries along with their pensions.

In five states alone — California, New York, Texas, Florida and Michigan — at least 66,000 government retirees also receive taxpayer-funded paychecks.

The practice has come under fire not just because of the cost of paying both a pension and a salary to the same person.

It also can strain public pension funds because the rehired retirees draw from them but do not contribute while taking the place of workers who otherwise would be paying into the system.

Of particular concern are people who retire early, only to take another government job and draw pension annuities for many more years than they otherwise would.

State governments already have a combined \$690 billion in unfunded pension liabilities, meaning they do not have enough money coming in to meet their future obligations.

"I don't see any private entity that would allow this to happen, and I don't see why government should allow it to happen," said Kenneth Sheets, a

state representative in Texas who tried unsuccessfully to end the practice in his state earlier this year.

Some states have dealt with the issue by imposing lengthy waiting periods on retired pub-

lic employees seeking to return to their positions, in hopes the jobs will get filled before retirees get a chance to re-occupy them. Others have placed limits on how much of their pensions retired employees can receive if

they come back to work.

No single agency collects data on government retirees who also are receiving public paychecks, and many states do not provide the information publicly.